

CHARLOTTE, N.C.
NEWS

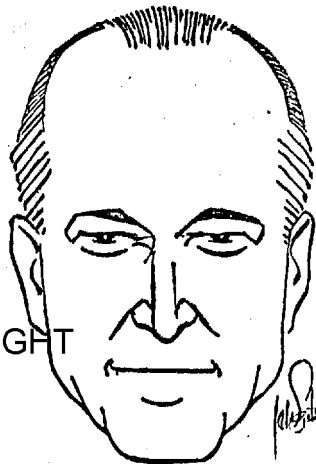
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A CIA Above The Law

CPYRGHT

Central Intelligence Agency, apparently, the less there is to say for it. The spy guys scare you when you can't see them but it's much worse when you can.



CPYRGHT

HELMS

First, the CIA refused to appear in hearings on a Sam Ervin-sponsored bill that would limit the agency's blanket rights to pry into the lives of its employees. Then it announced it would be

— secret hearing before the Judiciary Committee. Then Richard Helms, the new CIA chief, got busy and managed to have the Ervin bill removed from the Senate agenda.

The performance prompted Senator Ervin to make public a blistering memorandum he had sent to other Judiciary Committee members accusing the CIA of trying to stand above the law and of active and illegal lobbying in Congress. He read the appropriate federal law forbidding agencies of the government from attempting to influence the passage or defeat of legislation before Congress and suggested that the CIA might leave its lie detectors long enough to investigate whether this statute has been violated.

An investigation of some sort definitely is called for. It is no light matter when government agencies begin bullying Congress or trading off favors for preferential treatment. The applicable law in this case is vital to protect government from the paralyzing grip of an all-powerful bureaucracy. If this matter is allowed to drop without further comment, Congress will serve notice that the CIA is indeed above the law.